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WHEN THE WORLD GETS GREEN.

THE world is brown to-day, dear,
The skies are overcast,
Our paths all rustle mournfully
With dead leaves of the past.
But every year, remember, dear,
The winter's loss is seen,
And every year we laugh at loss
When the world gets green.

The world is brown, to-day, dear,
Our boughs are very bare;
And not a bird with prophet song
Uplifts the heavy air;
But every year, remember, dear,
We learn what bare boughs mean,
And every year the birds come back
When the world gets green.

Our hearts are very silent, dear,
Like nests in winter-time.
And round the empty, sunless things
No coaxing tendrils twine.
But every year, remember, dear,
The empty nests are seen;
And full nests always take their place
When the world gets green.

—Mrs. M. F. Butts.

TAKING IT FOR GRANTED.

WITH marks of a rough, stormy life all over him, a man of about fifty years, gray and sunburnt, sat in my office. I found him there when I went in one morning not long ago.

"Here is somebody waiting for you, Elwell," said Mr. Bigelow.

I looked around, and the man rose and held out his hand.

"Averill—my name is Averill," said he, looking sharply at me out of a pair of shrewd gray eyes. "I am an old friend of your mother; but I have not met her for a matter of five-and-twenty years. So I thought I'd call and ask after her and her family."

"I am glad to see you," said I. "Are you a relative of my mother?"

"No," replied Mr. Averill. "We were of the same name, but not connected—unless it may be very distantly. I used to know her and her folks, though, as well as I did my own sisters, and better, too. Let's see—where is your Aunt Augusta now?"

"She is living with her children in Portland," said I.

"Pretty well, is she, do you know?" asked Mr. Averill.

"Very well when we heard last. Aunt Augusta has good children and a pleasant home, and seems quite happy."

"Um-m-m-m! That is nice," said Mr. Averill, fumbling at a rough nugget of gold that hung as a charm from his watch-chain.

I hadn't much to do that day, so I talked off and on with my visitor till it was time to go home, and then took him along with me. I left him in the sitting-room and went to find mother. She was mixing biscuits for supper, looking through her glasses, and singing a snatch of some old, half-forgotten love-ditty of her youth.

"Mother!" said I, breaking in upon her song. "Come in the other room. An old friend of yours wants to see you."

Mother looked up over her glasses.

"An old friend? 'Tisn't any of the Maine folks, is it?" she asked.

Because, if it was so much as a dog that had trotted across a corner of the State of Maine, on his four legs, mother would have run, with her arms out and a smile of welcome, without stopping to even wash the dough off her hands. As it was, with only an indefinite thought of seeing "an old friend," she went, with a dust of flour on her nose, and without her company cap.

As soon as she had stepped inside the sitting-room door, she stood and looked at her guest, and he stood and looked at her.

"It is Sam, as true as you are born!" she said, at last.

Then they both laughed, and then they both wiped their eyes, though they didn't seem like that sort of people, especially Mr. Averill.

I never knew mother to forget her housekeeping before, but this time she let the biscuit burn till they were black as my shoe; and when she mixed some more she put in sugar instead of salt, and left out the saleratus altogether. But her cheeks grew pink, and her cap strings flew, and she nor her guest seemed to know the difference.

"Oh, honey!" cried my mother, hopping up from the tea-table as soon as she was seated. "You haven't lost your sweet tooth, have you, Sam?"

"How you do remember!" returned Sam, admiringly.

"I should think I ought to," answered my mother, with a girlish laugh. "The way you used to pick up walnuts to carry to the cross-roads store and trade for molasses and make candy of! Speaking of the cross-roads store, I wonder if you know our old storekeeper's daughter, she that was Sarah Curly, has lost her husband?"

"No, has she? Strange I never heard of it," replied Mr. Averill, appearing as astonished as though he had been hearing from his old neighbors every week.

"Yes," said my mother. "She married one of old Si Seaver's boys, the oldest one, Jonathan, and he died sudden,—all at once; well, it must be something like half-a-dozen years ago,—and left his wife and so many children—five children or else six, I don't know which."

"You don't say!" ejaculated Mr. Averill, passing his honey plate for the third time. No, evidently he had not lost his sweet tooth.

After supper, mother washed up the dishes and talked, and Mr. Averill smoked his pipe and listened. It was the first time I ever allowed anybody to smoke in my house, but I had nothing to say now. I even filled his pipe and lighted it for him. And then he told the story of his life, which had been full of strange and interesting adventures. He was evidently a man who did not read much and who could not have written well, but he could talk; not always grammatically, perhaps, but always with force and fascination.

It seemed that years and years ago, his father and my mother's father lived in a town in the valley of the Kennebec. My mother's father was a large farmer and Mr. Averill's father was a very small farmer with a very large family. So his youngest son, Sam, came to work for my grandfather. My mother and my aunt Augusta were young girls—they were twins, and I suppose by the way they look now that they must have been pretty then. My mother was early engaged and married to my father; but there was Augusta, and there was Sam; and where one was you might usually find the other near at hand. Sam never said anything, he was not of a demonstrative kind, but he knew how he felt, and he supposed Augusta knew too.

So the years budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit, until at last Sam went down to Connecticut to take charge of a saw-mill for an uncle of his. He wrote to Aunt Augusta and Aunt Augusta wrote to him; and now and then he came to Maine on business, always going to my grandfather's before he went home, and carrying himself toward Augusta like an accepted lover.

After a few years he found himself possessed of twelve thousand dollars, and immediately went to work to spend it. He went abroad, to England and Rome and Egypt and Paris and Germany and Sweden and Russia and everywhere. When he came home at last it was with only fifty dollars in his pocket. So next he went out among the copper mines of Lake Superior, and in time was again possessed of twelve thousand dollars.

"Now I will come home and marry Augusta, and settle down," said he to himself. But he didn't say it to anybody else. It never occurred to him that was necessary.

Meantime my Aunt Augusta had not stood like a rose in a pot, waiting for the gardener to come and pick it. She cast out her roots and threw up her branches and bloomed as though it was enough to fulfill the laws of being and beauty for their own sakes.

In that simple neighborhood work was supposed to be the chief end of everybody. So Aunt Augusta learned vest-making, and then she went to Coos, where her brother Nathan lived, and set up for herself.

Coos was a little crumb of a town in those days; but it held up its head and had its stores and its mills, and its shops, and its great white meeting-house on a hill, with galleries on three sides and square pews and a high box pulpit.

The first Sunday after Aunt Augusta went there, she climbed the hill, of course, and went in the front pew with Uncle Nathan and his wife. She was fashionably dressed in a black crape gown, a scarlet shawl and a white silk bonnet with pink roses inside.

Her cheeks were as pink as her roses, and her eyes were as black as her gown.

There was no need that Mr. Keeler should point her out to the young men, but he took the pains to do it. Mr. Keeler, the minister, was a little lank man, as plain and gray as a dor-bug, and so afraid of the pomps and vanities that he wouldn't wear buttons on his coat. No sooner had his eyes fallen on Aunt Augusta, settling herself in the front pew like a variegated tulip, than he dropped the subject he had started upon for his sermon, and began to preach against conformity to the world. He was a sincere, earnest man, and he preached with all his might, emphasizing and illustrating his words by pointing with his blunt finger at the scarlet shawl and pink roses. So if anybody had neglected to look at them before, they looked then.

Among those who were obedient to the ministerial forefinger was Abner Stanton, the village blacksmith.

Abner Stanton's heart was a good deal like his iron—not easily melted—but when it once had been hammered into a shape, there it was, fixed and steadfast. And to-day Aunt Augusta's eyes went through it like red-hot arrows as he peered around at her from behind one of the pillars in the gallery.

The next day he came to get a vest made. The day after, he came to bring the buttons for it; and the day after that he thought, as he was going by, he would call and see if she had everything she needed, and how soon the vest would be done. It was not two days more before he was there again to bring a letter.

"I happened to see it at the post-office when I went after my paper, and so I brought it along. I could as well as not," said he.

The letter was from Sam Averill, telling about the luck he had had in mining, the weather, and the fact that he was well. Nothing more; nothing about the home he was building in his fancy, and the figure that was always central in his thoughts.

"I hope," said my uncle Nathan, "you are not foolish enough to set your mind on such a rolling stone as Sam Averill. He has no continuity to him."

"If we are going to hunt for a man that has no faults in this world, we'll have a long road of it," returned Aunt Augusta, bearing down the heavy pressing-iron upon her seam as though she were trying to crush the life out of something.

In less than a week Abner Stanton called again. He thought perhaps Miss Augusta didn't know the swamp-pinks were out, and so he brought her a handful, that he got on the way over from Cowesett.

Aunt Augusta had a weakness for flowers—she and my mother are alike about that—and she put a cluster of the blossoms in her hair at once, and another at her throat, while Abner Stanton looked at her with admiration in every hair of his head.

"If you were a sister of mine, you should always sit in a rocking-chair and wear swamp-pinks!" said he.

"Abner Stanton is a most excellent man," quoth Uncle Nathan, when he had gone his way, "an esquire and a head man in town. He's all wheat and no chaff. He'll make a first rate of a husband, and the girl who gets him will get a prize."

Aunt Augusta made some fierce clippings with her great tailor's shears, but she said nothing, and presently went up-stairs to answer Sam Averill's letter.

The next day Abner Stanton called to see Uncle Nathan on business, and she sent her letter to the office by him. So the months drifted along one after another like pictures in a magic-lantern. Abner Stanton came often on one excuse or another, or on none. He brought flowers and berries strung on grass, and sweet flag-root and birds' eggs. He was never intrusive with his love, but he made Aunt Augusta conscious of it every step she walked and with every breath she breathed. It was below her, above her, and all around her. He often brought her letters from Sam, and carried hers for him to the office.

"All things are fair in love," said he to himself. So now and then he forgot to mail, or to deliver one, dropping it in the fire instead. At last, as his love grew hotter and more impatient, he kept them back altogether, and still never allowed Aunt Augusta to lose sight or thought of himself.

Thus the time passed, until Sam Averill having made and lost and made again his twelve thousand dollars among the copper mines, came home to "marry Augusta and settle down."

Suddenly one day he appeared before my uncle Nathan, travel-worn and brown and shaggy. My uncle received him with great cordiality.

"Sam, I'm glad to see you!" said he. "How have you fared all this great long time?"

"Fair to middling. Where's Augusta?" returned Sam.

"Oh, Augusta! She is all right. You go to the tavern and fix up, and I'll find Augusta. I will be around in an hour or so and call for you. Augusta will be proper glad to see you, and so'll the rest of the folks. I don't know when there has been such a surprise in Coos before."

So Sam went off with his honest heart to find a razor and a wash bowl, and my uncle Nathan did a very mean thing. He went straight to Abner Stanton. "Abner," said he, going into the smithy, out of breath, "Sam Averill has come, and you must go right up and get Augusta to name the day, or you will lose her. I'll keep him out of the way as long as I can."

Abner dropped his hammer, without saying a word, and went up the street, rolling down his shirt-sleeves as he went. An hour after Uncle Nathan came home with Sam Averill.

"Here is an old friend you will be glad to see, Augusta," said he, opening the door of my aunt's workroom, where she sat stitching the pocket of a primrose-colored vest, and looking fresh as a hundred primroses herself.

"It is Sam!" said she faintly, starting to her feet and dropping her work.

It was Sam. Sam came at last, with his long-smoldering love and his tardy speaking.

"You are too late! An hour too late," said my aunt Augusta, when he had told his errand East. "I have just engaged myself to another man."

"You haven't done right, Augusta," said Sam. "You belong to me: you have always belonged to me, and you ought to have waited till I came."

"You didn't say anything," returned my aunt, with a little pride. "How was I to know what you meant? You never spoke a word."

"I took it you knew my mind," returned Sam. "I never thought of anybody else. I never should think of anybody else, and it didn't occur to me that you would. You must marry this person now you have promised him, of course. But it isn't right and it never will be right."

"Mr. Stanton is a worthy man; just as good as gold, clear through to the core. I have always liked him, and you never said anything," repeated my poor aunt Augusta; "I will be your friend, though, just the same."

They said no more; there was nothing more to be said, and in a month Aunt Augusta and Abner Stanton were married. Sam Averill stayed till after the wedding, and then he went off, and had never been heard of again until to-day by Aunt Augusta's family.

He went to California, throwing his whole life into work; his work prospered, and he had come back now with houses and lands and gold and mines—a rich man. He had come back to find Aunt Augusta, and learn how the world had fared with her. For in all these years of buying and selling and getting gain, he had kept the empty room in his heart that had once been filled by his love.

Aunt Augusta's married life had not been happy. It is very dangerous for a man to take in a mean habit temporarily, for it will stick to him, and Abner Stanton's character never recovered from the twist those intercepted letters gave it. I don't know what, but something was always going wrong between them. Even their children proved barriers instead of bonds. As he grew older his natural economy and thrift became stronger and stronger, until, as my mother said, "he got so clost he could sit, and seven more like him, on a three-cent piece." Finally, one day, under some provocation, he told Aunt Augusta about the lost letters.

"You oughtn't to have told me that, Abner," said she. "You ought not to have told me. I can never forgive you."

She never did. Always after, there seemed to be something separating them, cold and hard and transparent as ice, until at last they agreed to live apart. And so they did until the death of Mr. Stanton. Now Aunt Augusta was living surrounded by her children and grandchildren, happy and comfortable.

Mother brought down thus the story of Aunt Augusta's life, while Mr. Averill listened, eager and excited. When she had finished he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and starting up, began to walk the floor.

"I will start for Portland to-morrow morning and see what Augusta will have to say to me. I am of

the same mind I always was. I've never hankered for a moment after any other woman, and I am as ready to marry her to-day as ever I was."

So the next day I saw him on the Portland train, gray with years, but youthful with expectation.

This time he did not waste his opportunity by waiting to make himself fine, but with the grime and dust of travel yet upon him, he went directly to the house of Aunt Augusta's daughter, with whom she is living.

"Where is Mrs. Stanton? I want to see her right away," said he, as soon as the door was opened.

"You will find her here; walk in, if you please," replied the housemaid, throwing open the door of the sitting-room.

Mr. Averill stepped quickly forward. Yes, there she sat, stitching away as before on some kind of primrose-colored stuff, with her eyes as black and bright as ever. But the primroses were faded in her cheeks, and she wore a cap on her head.

"I have come for you again, Augusta. Am I too late this time?" cried the impatient lover.

The roses came back to Aunt Augusta's cheeks, and the red-hot arrows shot out of her eyes once more.

"Bless us! If it isn't Sam Averill, nose and all!" she said, holding up her hands.

From twenty to fifty is but as a watch in the night, then the years are past; and it is only when an old lady nods triumphantly at you from the looking-glass, saying, "Here I am, my dear!" or when children that you have nursed in your arms come around with the rights and duties of full-grown men and women, that you remember one is no longer young at fifty. But the sight of Sam Averill's gray hairs and wrinkles were as good as a looking-glass to remind Aunt Augusta.

"Sit down, Sam," said she, "and let me look at you. It seems like the real old times to see you once more. You look wonderful natural, but dear me, how you have changed! You've grown old as well as myself."

But Mr. Averill was not to be diverted by any side issues.

"Augusta," said he, earnestly, "I made a serious mistake once. It was not a mistake about my own mind, however; that remains the same it always was. Every woman I've ever seen seemed like a tall candle beside the sun when I think of you. I have made my fortune, and all I want now is you to come and share it with me. It is you, or nobody, just as it always was."

Maybe Aunt Augusta's heart throbbed a little with the old yearning toward the love of her youth, but she shook her head with unhesitating decision, as she put out her hand to stir the cradle where her youngest grandchild lay asleep.

"It can never be, Sam," said she. "I won't deny that it was all a mistake my marrying Stanton. He didn't turn out to be the man I took him for. He proved contrary and ornery, and beside he wrote letters in disguise. But that is all over and past, and can't be undone. And now I am in the midst of my children with my grandchildren growing up about me, and I am in my right place. I shouldn't be contented to leave everything and go off to a new country to begin the world over again, as it were. I am too old an oak to be transplanted."

Well, after that Mr. Averill might have talked till he was at the age of Methuselah. Aunt Augusta had made up her mind, and an earthquake couldn't shake it.

So Mr. Averill again went away alone.

"Well, Amelia, Augusta wouldn't have a word to say to me," said he, walking in upon mother and me as we sat at supper a few evenings after, "not a word."

"I want to know if that is so!" cried mother, fluttering up after another plate and knife. "Lay your overcoat right off and sit by and have a cup of tea with us. Augusta always was decided, and you couldn't turn her after she got her mind fixed. She wouldn't keep you waiting long for your answer, either. Well, it is likely it is for the best; we will hope so," pursued mother, reaching over to put an extra lump of sugar in Mr. Averill's cup, as though to sweeten life if possible for him.

"It serves me right in taking it for granted that Augusta understood my intentions. I must have been a self-conceited, inconsiderate fool. But it seems hard that a body can't work his way out of a blunder in a whole lifetime."

Mother looked full of sympathy, and dropped another lump of sugar in Mr. Averill's cup. To my

astonishment he seemed to relish it the better, as if life were growing sweeter and sweeter.

Mother and Mr. Averill sat up late that night; so late that as I had had a hard day, I went off to bed and left them talking over old times and purring like a couple of cats by the kitchen fire.

After breakfast the next morning, mother followed me into the hall when I started for the office.

"I want to speak with you, Elwell, just a minute," said she, stroking my coat-sleeve, tremulously. "What should you say to my going back to California along with Mr. Averill?"

"You, mother!" I cried, feeling as though the world had tumbled off its axis. "Why, it is Aunt Augusta he wants. 'It is Augusta, or nobody!'"

"Yes, so it was," returned mother, humbly, "but Sam says I seem more like Augusta, as she used to be, than she does herself. To tell you the truth, Elwell," continued mother, humbler still, "I suppose it wouldn't have taken much to turn me toward Sam in my young days; I always thought the world and all of him; but he seemed to take rather more to Augusta. She was always nineteen to the dozen, and I never could hold my own against her. And then your father, he came along, and I never was sorry it happened as it did. But now you don't need me, and Sam and I have about concluded to make arrangements, only I told him I must have a talk with you first and get your advice."

Get my advice! Dear little mother! I was not idiotic enough to offer it if I had any advice to give. So she and Mr. Averill went on and "made arrangements."

Which arrangements were that that day two weeks, after a quiet wedding at the minister's, they started off for California together, to begin life anew on each other's account, as blithe and joyous as two birds on the wing.

—Frances Lee.

IMAGINATIVE FRIENDSHIPS.

FOREIGNERS in America complain that our friendships of to-day are neglected to-morrow. We do not, they say, follow up our protestations; we are on the alert for new interests. Perhaps there is some inconstancy in the national mind. It is customary to say that the French have no word for home; but they have the abiding fact. Is it not a serious thing that there are so few permanent homesteads among us? In France, despite of the missing word, there is the important fact that home-life exists, and in it there is a sacredness and tender care which is not too frequent in this bustling country, where every man is in anxious haste to change his house for a better one. There is a nearness, an intimacy, a habit of friendship there for which we have, alas! little time as yet in America. There all its little observances are kept up. For instance, the seat at table is always reserved for the old friend who comes without invitation.

When I am invited to the house of a friend, I feel as if a great compliment were paid to me. Surely it is an honor to be bidden into the well-guarded home circle, to be made free of its intimacies, and of the winning unwordliness that often exists in it! I once had letters of introduction to some Scotch families who lived near Edinburgh. When I reached their houses, I found their gardens surrounded with high walls; and servants undid the gates to me, as the barriers of the Syrian mountain monasteries that Curzon visited were let down to travelers. I felt myself (to be) admitted to a place that was in some sort sacred.

There is doubtless something attractive about open doors and unguarded welcomes; and these are, indeed, a natural feature of life in new countries. But the choicer life and friendship are not so nurtured. We need more care in guarding the entrance to our homes; but when that entrance is given, we need more heartiness and depth of feeling, whether as guest or as entertainer.

One fault of our careless social intercourse is the opportunity that it gives for the obtrusion of friendship. I wish to make complaint of aggressive friendships from which I have suffered—invasion of my inner self. Why should we suffer siege and assault at the hands of persons who are determined to possess us? I do not fancy that my experience in this respect is peculiar, nor am I vain of it. For those peremptory people would seem to regard me as a sort of abandoned territory, a waste which should become the lawful property of any wanderer who might enter a claim. I am obliged to repel, at first,